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O F F I C E O F N A T I O N A L E S T I M A T E S

6 April 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Some Implications of a Soviet-American Agreement  
To Control Strategic Weapons

NOTE

This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates in response to a request from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs for an informal paper on certain implications of an agreement between the US and the USSR to limit their strategic forces. As specified in the request, the following topics are considered: a) Western European reactions; b) Chinese Communist reactions; c) effects on Soviet policy toward China and Europe.

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## I. WESTERN EUROPEAN REACTIONS

1. The European allies regard US strategic forces as the primary US contribution to their defense. They would therefore expect to have their views heard on any arms agreement which affected the US strategic posture. If they gained the impression that the US regarded the negotiation simply as a bilateral Soviet-American affair they would be greatly concerned, and serious strains might arise in the alliance. To a great degree, then, the European reaction would depend upon the manner in which the arms control agreement was reached, and the extent of consultations which the US held with its allies in the course of the negotiations.

2. Reactions to the nonproliferation treaty have illustrated this point, and demonstrated how sensitive European governments are to the implications of Soviet-American arms control measures for European security. Any treaty which allowed the USSR to retain its force of many hundreds of MR-IRBM's targeted on Europe, and allowed it to complete ABM sites under construction, while at the same time barring any future US aid to Europe in offensive and defensive missiles, would probably be seen as imposing a serious

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disadvantage on the European states. More generally, a treaty which appeared to reduce the measure of strategic superiority which Europeans feel the US possesses, would arouse concern among some elements of European opinion. There would be a wide variety of calculations and theorizing as to the effect upon the balance of military power and upon the operation of deterrents in the new situation. It is possible that confidence in the credibility of the US deterrent would decline, and that the treaty might be taken as further evidence of a US intention to diminish its commitments to the defense of Europe.

3. Granted that there is due consultation, however, so that these problems can be properly dealt with, European reaction to the postulated agreement would be favorable. The prospect of checking the spiral of competition in advanced weapons would be welcomed, in part because it would tend to prevent a widening of the immense gap in military power between the superpowers and other states. But most important, it would be taken as a major step toward ending the East-West tensions which have marked the past two decades. Indeed it would probably be greeted as the opening of a promising new phase in East-West relations of a kind which the Europeans as well as most other peoples have greatly desired to see.

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4. Such initial reactions, mainly positive, might of course give way to subsequent concern, depending upon the course of developments in Soviet and American policy. As long as the USSR pursued a policy of detente in Europe all would be well -- at least all would be well providing the relaxation of tensions with the East did not open the way for a reappearance of old international rivalries within Western Europe itself. Should Soviet policy again become threatening, however, new problems would arise. US ability to convince Europeans of the firmness of US commitments might be substantially reduced, especially if it was felt that the US had in effect accepted parity with the USSR in strategic power. All this, however, would be a new situation; it might equally well arise if there had been no arms control agreement at all.

5. The likelihood of unfavorable reactions would be greatest in West Germany. For the present, Bonn would probably view the postulated arms control agreement as compatible with its own efforts to improve relations with the East. If these efforts show little return, as seems likely over the long run, there might be some danger that Germans would look back upon the agreement as signifying a Soviet-American accord at the expense of German interests. But, again, this would depend upon the whole international

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political atmosphere at the time, and upon the course of US relations with Germany itself, apart from the matter of arms control.

## II. CHINESE COMMUNIST REACTIONS

6. We do not foresee any significant change in Chinese policies resulting from the proposed Soviet-American arms control agreement. The Chinese would, of course, roundly denounce the agreement as another example of US-Soviet collusion. They would argue that, were it not for such collusion, the growth of Communist strategic power would justify bolder challenges to the US in many areas. They would probably not conclude, however, that unilateral adventures of their own would be attended by less risk, even if the agreement appeared to register a stabilized parity between US and USSR strategic forces. They would recognize that US power to deal with Chinese aggression was unaffected.

7. Militarily, the Chinese probably would see some advantages over the long term. Even though they are years away from even a very modest intercontinental missile capability, they might see a net gain in a prohibition on the further deployment of ABM's which might eventually enhance their own crude missile capabilities.

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### III. EFFECTS ON SOVIET POLICY TOWARD CHINA AND EUROPE

8. China. Possible concern about a long term Chinese military threat might be one of the factors Moscow would consider in weighing an arms limitation agreement with the US, but we doubt that it would figure very importantly if for other reasons the Soviets wanted the agreement. Willingness to make the agreement would presumably reflect a Soviet expectation that no fundamental improvement in relations with China was in prospect, and, once made, the agreement might prove to be an obstacle to such an improvement.

9. Europe. In Western Europe, the USSR would probably expect to gain from its willingness to conclude an arms control agreement with the US. Moscow would seek to use the agreement to convince West Europeans that the Cold War was over, and that Europe could safely loosen its security ties with the US in the interest of an all-European arrangement. Eventually, if the Soviets judged that Atlantic defense ties had been weakened, they might turn again to policies of pressure in Europe. They would recognize, however, that any early or precipitate attempt to exploit the agreement in this way would be self-defeating.

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10. In East European countries, the Soviets might stand to lose a little from further demonstrations of their interest in detente. The East Germans would be distrustful and fearful of further isolation. The others would seek to take advantage of a relaxed climate to further their own particular interests and to expand their independence of the USSR. Again, these would be effects whose ultimate significance would depend in large measure on what was happening within the Western Alliance.

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